

Quarantine and Hygienic Practices about Combating Contagious Disease like COVID-19 and Islamic perspective

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Abstract

The COVID -19 is one of the most contagious and fatal diseases known today, which had spread in communities very fast. This deadly virus affecting the lives of many people and causing fatalities. Besides the strong practice of praying and putting trust in Allah for the cure of disease, Islam also recommends taking medications and adopt sufficient precautions for the safety and well-being of the community. Before 1400 years ago, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) introduced the quarantining and hygiene practice, at a time there was very little known to

combat the contagious diseases. Currently, modern societies are emphasizing on hand hygiene, social distancing, quarantining, and social isolation to combat COVID-19. Islam has superseded modern societies by establishing the idea of quarantines and hygienic practice for contagious and fatal diseases. The commandments to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by worldwide public health organizations are almost in line with the teachings of Islam.

Keywords: Contagious disease, COVID-19, Hygiene practice, Islam, Quarantining

Background

The COVID -19 is one of the most contagious and fatal diseases known today, which had spread in communities very fast. This deadly virus affecting the lives of many people, and causing deaths. Initially detected in December 2019 at Wuhan, China, this epidemic spread very quickly to the other parts of the country and world (1). China is a global business hub and many travelers commune here on a daily basis. Through these travelers, by mid of February 2020, the virus was reached 26 countries in the world (2). To date, this infection has extended over 208 countries, over 1,458,198 persons have been infected and 90, 310 fatalities recorded worldwide (3). On 30th January, 2020 World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a public health emergency and stressed the countries on collaborative efforts to prevent the rapid spread of this deadly virus (4). Numerous clinical trials are trying to explore the effective medication for COVID-19. To date, there is no effective medicine available to cure this deadly virus and only preventive measures are urged to stop the spread of disease (5). World health organization (WHO) and other public health organizations have recommended precautions that can help to prevent the spread of infection like hand hygiene, social distancing, cough or sneeze into elbows, and staying at home (6). The Chinese government also took decisive actions to decrease the

spread of the virus in China and helped other countries. The suspension of public transport and international flights, isolation and care of suspected and infected cases, closing the public spaces, hygiene practice, and public awareness about the disease. These parameters were also followed by other countries of the world as this was the only solution to combat the virus (7).

Islamic perspectives for treatment

Islam is a complete code of life covering social, moral, spiritual, political, and health aspects of life. Besides the strong practice of praying and putting trust in Allah for the cure of disease, Islam also recommends taking medications and adopt sufficient precautions for the safety and well-being of the community. The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) said,

" مَا أُنْزِلَ اللَّهُ دَاءً إِلَّا أُنْزِلَ لَهُ شِفَاءٌ "

"There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment" (8).

Islamic perspectives about contagious disease-COVID-19

Islam is the religion of humanity, emphasizes on safety of the mankind and even forbidden to adopt unnatural means of deaths like suicide. Similarly, the protection of physical well-being and health is an objective of Islamic wisdom. As said by the Prophet Muhammad

"Do not cause harm, and don't get harmed" (9) " لَا ضَرَرَ وَلَا ضِرَارَ "

Likewise, Islam also emphasizes to save any human life irrespective of his religion, and race. Allah has mentioned in His Holy Book (Quran):

وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

"Whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely". (Chapter 5: verse 32)

The implication of Islamic teachings with the current situation of COVID-19 Pandemic

Islam emphasizes the healthy lifestyle of the individuals and the community as a whole especially dealing with any contagious and fatal diseases. The guidelines that are practiced today for the prevention of COVID-19 by public health organizations, communities and governments are almost in line with Islamic literature and practice. Before 1400 years ago, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) introduced the quarantining and hygiene practice, at a time there was very little knowledge to combat the contagious diseases. Recently, Dr. Anthony Fauci (2020) mentioned that good hygiene, quarantining and isolation can be the most effective tool to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other contagious diseases. Moreover, Craig Considine (March 2020) in an article mentioned that Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) has suggested good hygiene and quarantine from any contagious disease long ago, while He was no expert on matters of fatal diseases (10). In the following part, we will discuss the different aspects of Islamic teachings that are implicated in the current situation to combat COVID-19.

Adherence to hygienic practices:

The COVID-19 is a respiratory virus and primarily spreads through the droplets generated by coughing or sneezing and through saliva or discharge from the nose of an infected person. The virus can be transferred from the surface while touching it and then touching nose, mouth or eyes (11). The most effective part to prevent the spread of virus is adherence to hygienic practice as recommended by WHO and other public health authorities. In Islam, there are many teachings which are indicative of paying attention to cleanliness of the body, clothing and place where one is living.

Hand and Face Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the most important measure to avoid any transmission of microbial to the body. Islam emphasizes keeping the hand clean and washing private parts and hands after going to the

bathroom. Routine practicing of washing hand, nose, mouth, face, and feet contribute to body and respiratory hygiene that are mandatory five times a day before offering prayers in the form of ablution (wudu). Building a culture of washing the exposed parts can decrease the risk of infections. In a Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon Him) ordered:

إِذَا اسْتَيْقَظَ أَحَدُكُمْ مِنْ نَوْمِهِ فَلَا يَغْمِسْ يَدَهُ فِي الْإِنَاءِ حَتَّى يَغْسِلَهَا ثَلَاثًا فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَدْرِي أَيْنَ بَاتَتْ يَدُهُ

"Wash your hands three times after you wake up; you do not know where your hands have moved while you sleep." (12)

Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) used to rub his hands-on clay before washing with water. The clay is proved to have antiseptic properties that were used as an alternative to hand sanitizer that is widely recommended for hand hygiene in the current situation (13).

Oral Hygiene

The mouth is a gateway of getting infection, oral hygiene is also essential to protect from infection and the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) used to clean the teeth multiple times with “siwak” (to clean the teeth with Siwak which is a tooth-brush in the form of a pencil from the roots of the Arak tree) and recommended to use before each Prayer.

إِذَا قَامَ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ يَشُورُ فَأَهُ بِالسَّوَاكِ.

“Whenever the Prophet (Peace be upon Him) got up at night, he used to clean his mouth with Siwak” (14)

Covering the face while sneezing

As the spread of COVID-19 is through the droplets of sneezing and coughing, the WHO and other health authorities are emphasizing to cough/Sneeze into the elbow or cover the face with a tissue paper. The same practice can be observed from Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) mentioned as:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ إِذَا عَطَسَ عَطَى وَجْهَهُ بِيَدِهِ أَوْ بِنُؤْبِهِ وَعَضَّ بِهَا صَوْتَهُ

“The Prophet (Peace be upon Him) would sneeze, he would cover his face with his hand or with his garment, and muffle the sound with it” (15).

Quarantine, and Social Isolation

The infected COVID-19 people nonetheless pose a risk to others as well. About 5 million people left Wuhan before the start of the travel ban on Jan 23, 2020, that was the main reason for the spread of the virus to the other areas of China and the world (7). Quarantine proved an essential measure adopted by many countries and communities for the comfort of the sick and protection of the large public. Islam has superseded modern societies by establishing the idea of quarantines for contagious and fatal diseases before 1400 years back. As Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) said:

"إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِالطَّاعُونَ بِأَرْضٍ فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا، وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا"

"If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague outbreaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place." (16)

This practice has been a part of succeeding Muslim caliph and companions of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) .As Umar Ibn Al Khattab was on his way to Syria and had reached Sarg when the leader of the Muslim army, Abu Ubaidah Ibn Al Jarrah, and his companions met him and told him of a pestilence that had broken out in Syria. ' Umar Ibn Al Khattab remembered the Prophet's (saw) saying: "If it (plague) be in a country where you are staying, do not go out fleeing it, and if you hear it is in a country, do not enter it." 'Umar RA praised Allah and then came back (17).

Avoid Shaking Hands:

The Prophet did not shake hands with a leper and it is also in line with recommendations of public health authorities to prevent the spread of infection. Among the delegation from Thaqeef

there was a leper. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent word to him saying:

”إِنَّا قَدْ بَايَعْنَاكَ فَارْجِعْ”

“We have accepted your oath of allegiance; so you may go”(18).

Social Distancing:

Prophet (peace be upon Him) strongly encouraged to keep the social distance from a contagious disease. He said:

وَفِرَّ مِنَ الْمَجْدُومِ كَمَا تَفِرُّ مِنَ الْأَسَدِ ."

“Flee from the leper as you would flee from a lion” (19).

Current guidelines of prevention	Health related advantage/objective	Islamic evidence
To save yourself and others	Safety of all human beings	“Whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely”. (Chapter 5: verse 32)
Quarantine	Prevent rapid spread between communities and countries	"If it (plague) be in a country where you are staying, do not go out fleeing it, and if you hear it is in a country, do not enter it."(16)
Hand and face Hygiene	Avoid any transmission of microbial to the body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Five times ablution before mandatory prayers” • "Wash your hands three times after you wake up; you do not know where your hands have moved while you sleep." (12)

Social distancing	Avoid spread of disease from infected to healthy	“Flee from the leper as you would flee from a lion.”(19)
Avoid Shaking hands	Avoid spread of disease from infected to healthy	“We have accepted your oath of allegiance; go back. (Prophet did not shake hands with leper)(18)
Sneeze. Cough into the elbow or tissue paper	To avoid the spread of virus through droplets of nose of an infected person to a healthy person	The Prophet would sneeze, he would cover his face with his hand or with his garment, and muffle the sound with it.(15)
Stay Home ,Stay Safe, Save lives	For own Safety and for others	“Do not cause harm, and don’t get harmed” (9)

Table: Relationship of current guidelines of prevention with Islamic evidence

Conclusion

The commandments to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by worldwide public health organizations are almost in line with the teachings of Islam. The Islamic guidance towards the prevention of contagious diseases is quite obvious and effective that is the most powerful tool with the current situation to prevent further the spread of contagious diseases like COVID-19. These guidelines to prevent COVID-19 have proved effective in those countries that have implemented it.

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